

NISEI VETERANS

*World War II, European
and Pacific Theaters*

Mitsugi Kasai

"In grateful remembrance of our loyal sons who gave their lives serving our country in World War II" are emotional words inscribed on the 15-foot monument erected in the Salt Lake City Cemetery by the Japanese American Servicemen's Family League of Salt Lake City, Utah in 1947.

The eighteen names inscribed on the monument were members of the bold 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT) which arose from distrust and fear to a remarkable position of honor and regard.

The 100th was first committed to battle for the Italian campaign. Their bravery in action and extreme determination to prove themselves as loyal good soldiers caused a high rate of casualty that it earned the name of the "Purple Heart Battalion." The 100th fighting record led to the decision to send the 442nd "Go For Broke" RCT to Italy. The 442nd veteran's efficiency and fighting ability very quickly approached that of the 100th, which became the 442nd's first battalion, but retained its original designation of "100th."

The 100th/442nd were involved in seven major campaigns in France and Italy. They fought the elite troops the Germans could muster against them, including the combat tested Afrika Corps, SS troops, Panzer Brigade, the Herman Goering Division and the Kesselring



The Japanese American Servicemen's Family League of Salt Lake City was organized during World War II as a support group for the families of Nisei soldiers serving the armed forces of the United States for the purpose of maintaining morale on the home front by extending aid and comfort to the family members. The League erected a stone shaft at the Salt Lake City Cemetery which was dedicated on May 25, 1947, to the memory of the Japanese American soldiers from Utah who died in the service of their country in World War II. The following is a list of the Utah servicemen whose names are inscribed on the monument: John Akimoto, Edward Ogawa, Victor Akimoto, Takaaki Okazaki, Robert T. Endo, M. Frank Shigemura, Russell Takeo Fujino, Roy Ikeda, Isamu Matsukawa, Ben Masaoka, Kazuo Mitani, Tomasu Hirahara, Noboru Myoko, Shigeru Mori, Mitsuru Myoko, Togo Sugiyama, Haruto Moriguchi, Shiro Asahina. Submitted by Margaret Okubo.

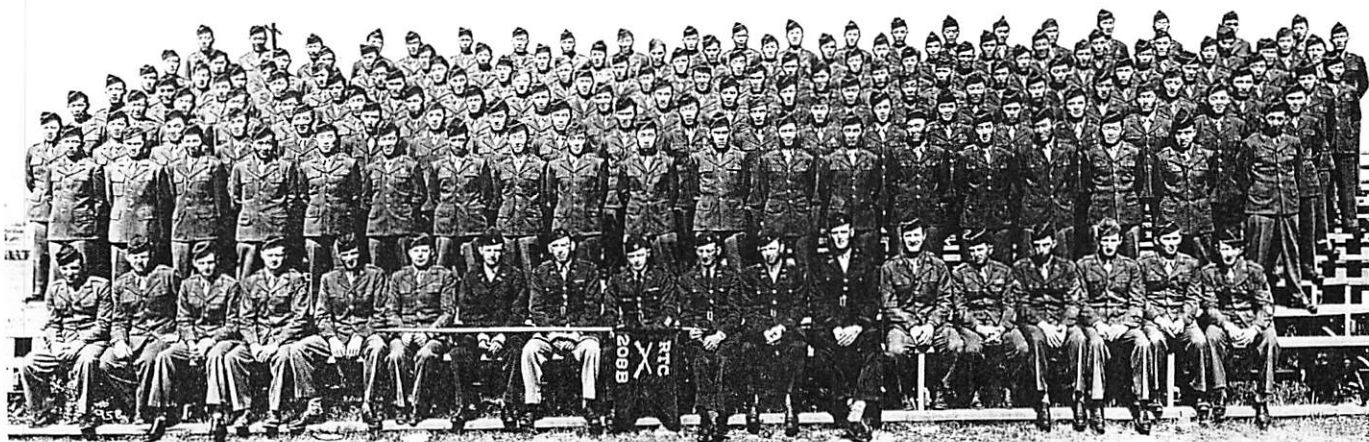
Machine Gun Battalion.

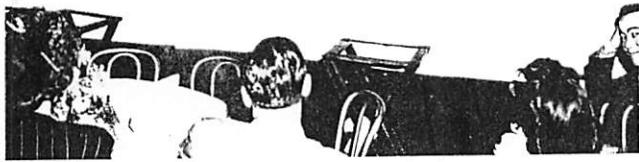
It was clear from the very beginning that the 442nd was an independently organized spearhead type of unit which is used to make initial attacks upon enemy positions because the enemy is strongest during an initial attack.

Having operated independently many times, the 442nd suffered an enormously high casualty rate. Although the 100th/442nd established itself as the most decorated unit for its size and duration of service (September 1943 to May 1945), the casualty rate is the highest of any unit

in the entire history of the American Army. The 100th/442nd were replaced over three complete times placing the casualty rate at three hundred percent. During combat in WW II, if an infantry regiment or division suffered more than twenty percent casualty, the losses were considered excessive and the units would be sent behind the line for reconstitution and rest. This was not the case for the 100th/442nd. They were in battle constantly with no rest, no re-equipping, and simply with recruits coming largely from concentration camps in America.

1944, Nisei soldiers from Ft. Blanding, Florida.





1946, Homecoming dinner for returning Nisei veterans was filled to capacity. Governor Maw and LDS Church president, George Albert Smith were in attendance. At mike is Ben Kuroki.

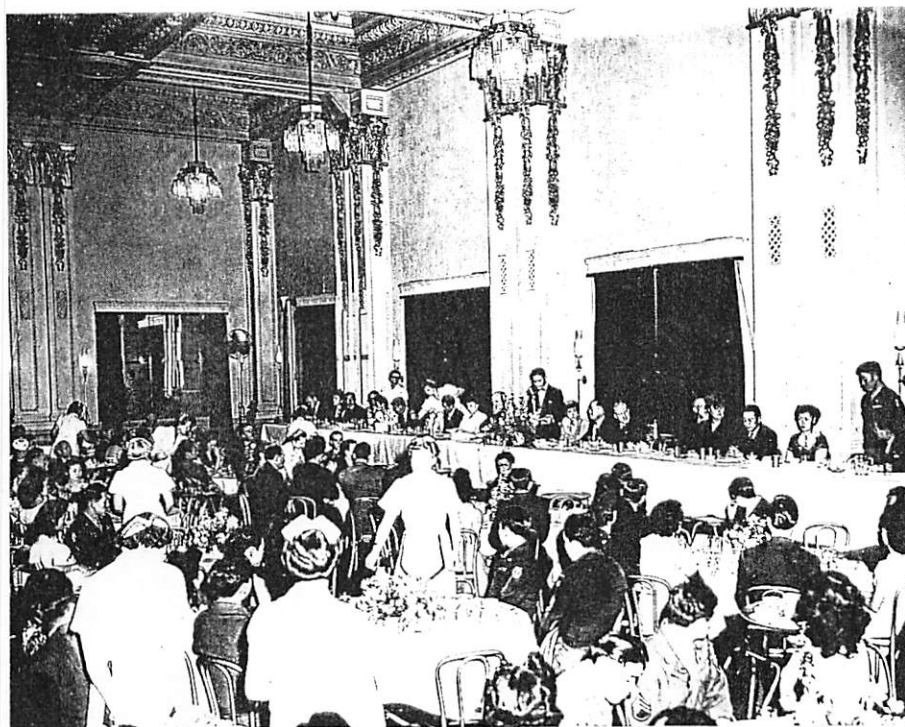
One of the fiercest fighting engaged by the 442nd occurred when it received orders to rescue the "Lost Battalion" of the 141st Regiment, 36th Division which was surrounded by a German ring. The battalion was rescued with 200 of the 442nd killed and 600 wounded, which exceeded the number the Lost Battalion men saved. The other order was to breach the Gothic Line on the Italian Front which was crucial to ending the war. Two American divisions had been committed to break through the heavily fortified Gothic Line but were helpless to do so. The 442nd was assigned a spearhead divisionary attack from the central fighting

so that the two American divisions could break through German positions. In creating the divisionary attack, the 442nd climbed two nearly vertical 3,000 foot mountains to find positions to launch an attack. The attack took thirty-two minutes to break two key German mountain positions. With this break in the Gothic Line, other enemy positions fell one by one. The

Gothic Line which couldn't be broken by 40,000 men in six months was broken by 4,000 442nd men in a fantastic 32 minutes. Originally, the 442nd commander and his staff wanted a week which the commanders of the two American divisions could not believe.

A total of 18,143 individual decorations for valor made the 100th/442nd the most decorated unit for its size and duration of service in the history of the United States. The 100th/442nd received eight Presidential Unit Citations. No other unit of any size had ever won that many awards for bravery in action.

1946, March 29, Nisei Victory Committee holds homecoming banquet for first returning Nisei veterans. Initially, the committee was turned down for the event by the hotel. Elmer Smith, University of Utah professor, complained and the event was reinstated.



Having received so many Presidential Citations, President Harry S. Truman asked the 100th/442nd on its return from Europe to

march on the White House lawn to have him personally pin the final Presidential Unit Citation on the 442nd colors. When pinning the colors, President Truman said, "I can't tell you how much I appreciate the privilege of being able to show just how much the United States thinks of what you have done... You fought not only the enemy but you fought prejudice and you won."

While the men of the 100th/442nd were fighting with distinction in Europe, 6,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry (Nisei) were playing a vital but little known role in the Pacific Theater of World War II. They were the last unsung heroes of World War II. They were graduates of the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS) of Camp Savage and Fort Snelling, Minnesota. The MISLS is the forerunner of the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California where it now teaches over twenty five languages to American soldiers,

The MISLS was started on November 1, 1941 to fill a void that war against Japan was imminent and there was a mounting concern among a few military officers regarding the lack of Americans with adequate knowledge of the difficult Japanese language. A school was opened in an abandoned hangar at Crissy Field in the presidio of San Francisco. The school began with four Nisei instructors and 60 students, 58 of which were Nisei and two Caucasians. In May 1942 when they graduated, ten were retained as instructors. Half of the remaining were sent to join the Marines for the invasion of Guadalcanal and in August the other half sent to Aleutian Islands.

They served from the icy tundra of Kiska and Attu in the Aleutians to the steaming jungles of Burma and India, and on still classified missions with the Office





1918, WWI veteran
Private First Class
George Hakata.

of Strategic Services (OSS). Nisei of the MISLS played a major, if unheralded role in nearly every battle in the Pacific during World War II.

Although the contributions of MISLS graduates have rated little more

than a heroic and gallant footnote to the chronicles of war, General Douglas MacArthur underscored their part when he said, "Never in military history did an army know so much about the enemy prior to an actual engagement." Also, Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Chief Intelligence Officer of MacArthur's command, unequivocally stated, "The Nisei saved countless Allied lives and shortened the war by two years."

There were three Military Intelligence (MIS) Centers in the Pacific Theater. The first was Allied Translation and Intelligence Service (ATIS) which became General MacArthur's eyes and ears. ATIS was the largest of the centers with 3,000 Nisei in service. They produced twenty million pages of translations, among them some of the most important documents of World War II.

Perhaps the Nisei's biggest intelligence coup was the translation of the "Z"

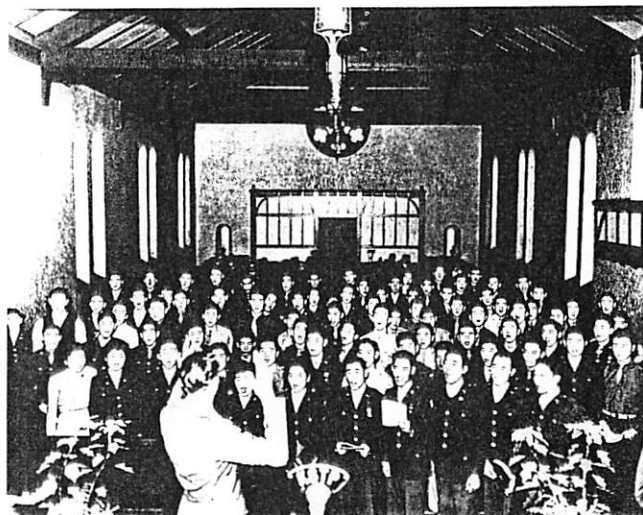
Plan which was Japan's strategy for the defense of the Mariannas (Guam, Saipan and Tinian).

Armed with that translation Admiral Raymond Spruance set sail for the Mariannas with the greatest Armada ever gathered. The homefront newspaper dubbed the victory as the "Mariannas Turkey Shoot." From this coup, the Japanese carrier aircraft were no longer a threat and Tokyo was now within range of American bombers.

Another coup was the Imperial Japanese army's ordnance inventory. It listed amounts, types and manufacturers' names and locations on the home islands, providing new targets for the B-29's.

Prior to U. S. landings in the Philippines in October 1944, Nisei translators learned of Japan's master plan for the defense of the islands. As enemy fleets responded to U. S. landings on Leyte, the U. S. Navy was able to thwart the counter attacks and annihilate the enemy forces.

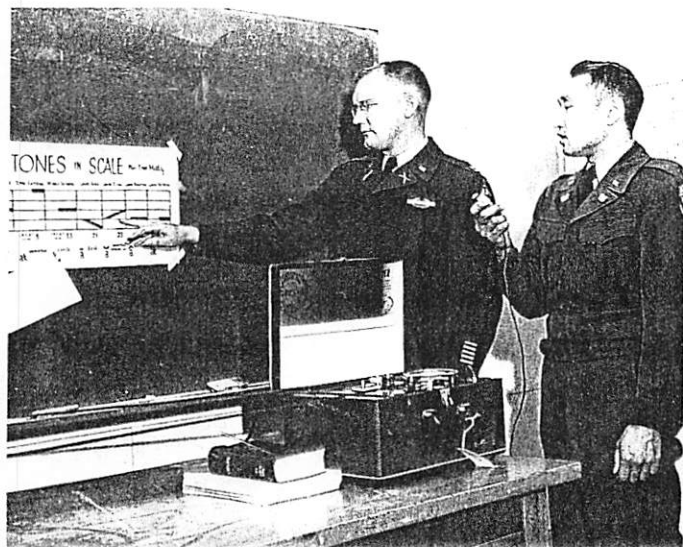
These were some of the spectacular contributions made by the Nisei. There were many more. A translation of radio messages intercepted in Turkey which the Japanese Ambassador to Germany sent, detailed messages to Tokyo about German defenses which helped General Dwight Eisenhower in his invasion of Europe.



Top, 1944, Nisei servicemen's choir.
Lower, 1945, Nisei camp somewhere in France.



1951, Major Dale Buis and close friend Officer Junior Grade Mitsugi Kasai at Presidio Language School. Major Buis was later to become the first casualty of the Vietnam war.



At home, in the United States, many families of the 100th/442nd MIS Nisei veterans were in concentration camps, behind barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers since all persons of Japanese ancestry had been evacuated from the West Coast in 1942 by the U. S. government and imprisoned in ten camps at isolated locations, including Topaz near Delta, Utah.

The Nisei played a vital role during combat years in the Pacific Theater during World War II to help win the war against Japan, but they also played a significant role during the Occupation of Japan to help win the peace and make Japan what it is today.

The following is the citation for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) to Jim Tazoi who was one of the 52 100th/442nd recipients of the DSC.

"JIM Y. TAZOI (20924666), Private First Class, Infantry, United States Army. For extraordinary heroism in action, on 28 and 29 October 1944, near Biffontaine, France. While serving as radioman for a command group, Private First Class Tazoi observed a concealed



1945, Horses were used at Ft. Douglas in Salt Lake City.

machine gun position which had been by-passed by forward elements. As the machine gunner attempted to fire at the command group, Private First Class Tazoi shouted warning to his comrades and opened fire on the nest to kill the gunner. The following day, Private First Class Tazoi, transporting his radio, joined the attacking elements in an advance under heavy automatic fire to take an enemy strongpoint. Later, he accompanied a group of riflemen in a bayonet charge against a strongly defended enemy hill position. Sighting an enemy machine gun nest, he exposed himself to heavy enemy fire and fired at the position to neutralize the effectiveness of the German weapon while his comrades assaulted the strongpoint. Although handicapped by his radio which made him an easier target for the hostile fire directed at him, he rushed to the assistance of two comrades who were trapped by two Germans throwing grenades. Struck by a sniper's bullet, he determinedly continued to advance and reached a clear field of fire. As he killed the two German grenade throwers he was wounded a second time by grenade fragments. The prodigious courage and fighting spirit of Private First Class Tazoi bring honor to the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Garland, Utah. The Distinguished Service Cross is the next award to Congressional Medal of Honor. 100th/442nd recipients of the signal DSC were deserving of Congressional Medal of Honor.



1945, Salt Lake girls Fumi Matsumiya and Alice Kasai entertain servicemen stationed at Ft. Douglas. The local YWCA, under Florence Pierce, organized dances and socials, sent comfort packages, visited hospitals for Nisei veterans.

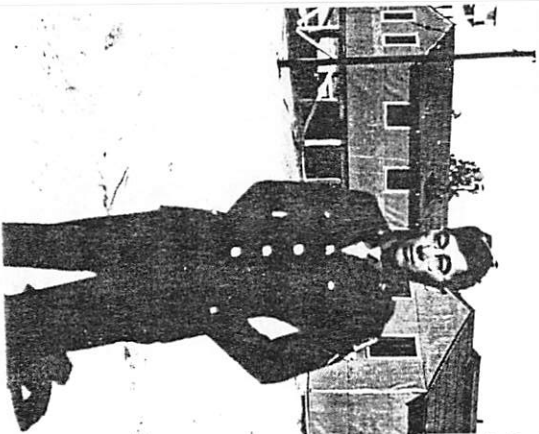


1945, George Tadehara and friend in France.

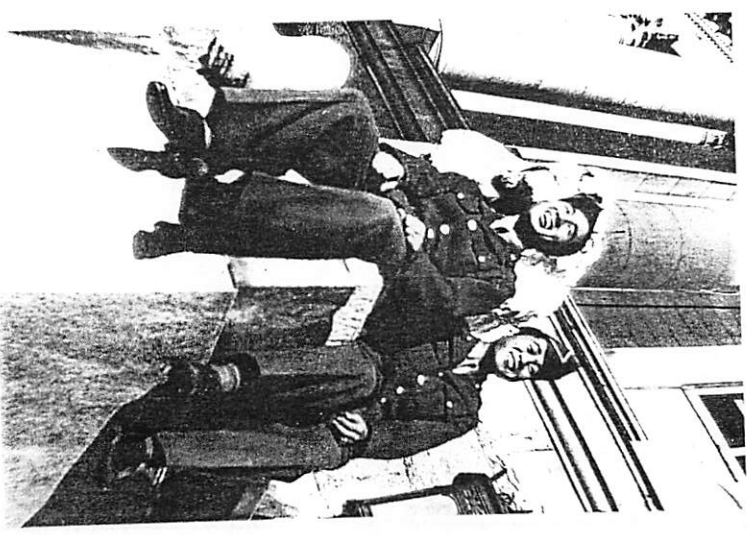


Doug Muir, proprietor of Fairmount Bowl and Jim Tazoi. Muir was a soldier of the "Lost Battalion" of the 141st Regiment, 36th Division which was rescued by the 442nd Regimental Combat Team of which Tazoi was a member. Tazoi was the recipient of Distinguished Service Cross.

1944,
George
Sumada



1944,
Shoji
Watanabe



1945, Hawaiian servicemen stationed at
Ft. Douglas visit State Capitol.



1954, December 10, 442nd Veteran's Post No. 9416, Salt Lake City,
Utah. Included l-r: Hersh Aramaki, Bill Shimizu, Jari Tsuyuki, Ted
Yamashita, Wallace Doi, Seiko Arakaki, Tomi Nakano, Lyle Kurisaki, Jr.

